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Preliminary Environmental Review

Montana Department of Fish and Game

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STATE OF MONTANA

DEPARTMENT OF

FISH AND GAME

Helena, MT 59601
December 6, 1977

Mr. Terry Carmody, Executive Director
Environmental Quality Council
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Terry:

The Department of Fish and Game has prepared a preliminary environmental review to cover the acquisition of approximately 2113 acres of Wild Horse Island in Flathead Lake. The island will be retained in as natural a state as possible, and will be managed as a state park.

While this document is a PER, it is being given full environmental impact statement distribution. A mailing list is attached.

We hope this document will satisfy the requirements of the Montana Environmental Policy Act. If you have any questions, please feel free to call on us.

Sincerely,

James A. Posewitz

James A. Posewitz, Administrator
Ecological Services Division

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Enc

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
(Draft)
FOR THE ACQUISITION OF
WILD HORSE ISLAND, FLATHEAD LAKE
LAKE COUNTY, MONTANA

FG-N-82

Prepared by:

Montana Department of Fish and Game
Helena, Montana

August, 1977

SUMMARY

The proposed action is the acquisition of approximately 2113 acres of Wild Horse Island in Lake County, Montana, through the efforts of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Montana Department of Fish and Game, University of Montana and The Nature Conservancy. Acquisition would effect state ownership of the majority of the island with about 52 acres remaining in private ownership. The public owned area would be managed as a state park by the Department of Fish and Game. A management plan would be prepared within one year of the date of purchase through a cooperative memorandum of understanding between the University of Montana and the department. Management would be directed toward retention of the park in as near natural condition as possible without impairment of ecological features and values.

The most significant negative impact of this action would be the probable loss of real estate taxes presently paid to Lake County in the amount of approximately $4018 per year, and the loss of future real and personal property taxes which would not accrue to the county because no future private improvements would be placed on the purchased area.

The most significant beneficial impact will be the retention in a natural state of a nationally significant island which is recommended for public purchase by the Federal Bureau of Outdoor Recreation's Islands of America report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Description of Proposed Action 1

II. Description of Existing Environment 2

Location 2

A. Physical Environment 2
1. Land Ownership and Use
2. Geology
3. Surface Water
4. Soils
5. Climate
6. Vegetation
7. Fish and Wildlife
a. Fish
b. Wildlife

B. Human Environment 7
1. Lake County
a. Subdivision Activity
b. Utility and Transportation
c. Population
2. Land Use
3. Economics
4. Recreational Opportunities
5. Historical and Archaeological

III. Environmental Impact of Proposed Action 11

A. Physical Environment 11
1. Geology
2. Surface Water
3. Soils
4. Vegetation
5. Wildlife
6. Fish

B. Human Environment 12
1. Lake County
a. Subdivision Activity
b. Transportation System
2. Population and Income
3. Area Economics
4. Recreational Opportunities
5. Historical and Archaeological

IV. Mitigating Measures in Proposed Action 14

V. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts 14

VI. Short-Term Use Versus Long-Term Productivity 15

VII. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources 16

VIII. Alternatives to the Proposed Action 16

ADDENDA

1. Area Location Map
2. Vicinity
3. Wild Horse Island Topographic Map showing private holdings
4. Vegetation Map
5. Contributors
6. Distribution

PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
WILD HORSE ISLAND ACQUISITION

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Department of Fish and Game proposes to acquire approximately 2113 acres (of a total 2165.09 acres) of Wild Horse Island in response to the mandate of House Bill 836 of the 45th Montana Legislature.

The area to be purchased has an appraised value of $3.5 million. One-half of this value will be donated by the present owner, A. P. MacDonald. The remaining value will be purchased using federal matching monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. No state revenue will be required. Because of the large amount of money involved it is not expected that the entire amount will be available at one time. Therefore, The Nature Conservancy has agreed to intercede on behalf of the state, gain control of the land which cannot be acquired by the state immediately and then relinquish it to the state as federal funds become available, probably over a five-year period.

At this date, 47 lots totaling 43 acres have been purchased and registered with Lake County by individual owners. In addition to these lots, an area of 9 acres will be retained by the MacDonald family. The portion of the island to be acquired will be managed by the Department of Fish and Game as a state park.

The proposed purchase of Wild Horse Island would result in the public ownership of the island. If public ownership occurs then a management plan would be developed by a coordinated effort of the University and the Department of Fish and Game. The proposed management plan would be implemented after a complete review and public participation approximately one year after ownership of the island. Management will be directed toward retention of the park in as near natural condition as possible without impairment of ecological features and values.

II. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

Location

A. Physical Environment

Flathead Lake lies in the northern portion of a large glacial valley in northwestern Montana about 40 miles southwest of Glacier National Park. Wild Horse Island is located in the southwestern portion of the lake approximately 10 airline miles north of Polson and 20 airline miles south of Kalispell. The island is in Lake County, Montana, as well as within the exterior boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation. It is within 80 miles of Missoula, the home of the University of Montana and the University's Yellow Bay Laboratory and Institute is on the east shore of the lake, 8 miles distant.

Flathead Lake is the largest natural fresh-water lake (126,000 acres) in the western states. It is a part of a vast recreational complex that includes Glacier National Park, Bob Marshall and Mission Wilderness Areas, Flathead National Forest and Hungry Horse Reservoir.

The island is composed of all of Section 18 and portions of Sections 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19 and 20 in Township 24 North, Range 20 West. The remainder of the partial sections lie under the surface of Flathead Lake. The land mass of Wild Horse Island constitutes a total of 2,165.09 acres.

1. Land Ownership and Use

The Stephens Treaty of 1855 ratified by Congress in 1860, designated the present exterior boundaries of the present Flathead Indian Reservation. In 1910, the general area of the lake lay in parts of Sanders, Missoula and Flathead Counties. Lake County was formed by vote in 1923 with Polson as the county seat.

The island has been in private ownership since the turn of the century. Various private holdings were accumulated and put under one ownership by Dr. J.C. Burnett. Following

Dr. Burnett's death the property was purchased by Bourke MacDonald.

A resort lodge was built on the island about 1910 and deteriorating remains of this resort exist today. The island was used for production of some hay and the grazing of horses and cattle during those early days. During the early 1960's only one horse and mule remained on the island and they lived under feral conditions.

Recently, one-acre tracts were offered for sale to purchasers. As of 1977, 47 lots totaling 43 acres have been sold. In addition, the owners will retain another 9 acres for their personal use and to meet existing sale obligations. The remainder of the island is being offered to the State of Montana for purchase.

2. Geology

During the Wisconsin Period of glaciation Flathead Lake was formed by the Flathead Glacier. Wild Horse Island was subjected to erosion and influences of this glacier. A portion of the glacier extended westward into the Big Arm area. Glacial action, followed by recession of the ice mass, deposited a terminal moraine at Polson and at Elmo. The Polson moraine thus created a natural barrier to the Flathead River causing the lake to be formed in a glacially eroded valley.

3. Surface Water

Flathead Lake is supplied with water from a number of small tirbutaries, the Swan River and the major source, the Flathead River. The drainage area of the lake encompasses approximately 7,010 square miles, including 625 square miles in the north fork drainage in British Columbia, Canada.

In 1938 the Rocky Mountain Power Company (now the Montana Power Company) completed construction of Kerr Dam and Hydroelectric Plant. Located in the Flathead River just downstream from the lake's outlet it provided a means for controlling and stabilizing the flows from the lake. Though the dam did not change the level significantly, it did establish a maximum

water level elevation of 2893 feet above mean sea level. Annual fluctuations average 10 feet with the low occurring in April and the high in late summer.

Flathead Lake is the largest natural body of fresh water west of the Mississippi River in the contiguous 48 states. It measures 34.9 miles long and is 16 miles wide at its widest points. Maximum depth is about 386 feet and the lake has a shoreline of some 115 miles. The extreme north and south ends are shallow areas with a depth of less than 20 feet and a bottom composition of sand, mud and ooze. Most of the littoral zone, however, is characterized by steep slopes. The lake is an oligotrophic lake; dissolved solid content is low and the water is clear. Although some surface temperatures reach the 70° F. range in mid-summer, the temperatures below 10 feet in depth usually range from 40° F. to 60° F. Water is slightly alkaline (pH 7.0 to 8.3) and oxygen is abundant at all depths.

4. Soils

Soil composition on Wild Horse Island was developed from glacial action and other means. Little breakdown of parent material has occurred; however, two basic types of plant communities exist. Palouse prairie with its grass cover exists on the south side while the north side has a coniferous timber cover.

5. Climate

Climatic conditions for the general area of Flathead Lake have been recorded for over 50 years. Significant changes in climatic conditions can and do occur within short distances around the basin. Mountain ranges, the prevailing wind and the large water body create local climatological differences. In general, the western side of the lake is in a rain shadow and receives less rainfall than comparable east side locations.

The growing season of the area varies from about 150 days at Kalispell to an estimated 30 days in high mountainous areas. The lake itself can modify slightly the weather of

adjacent shore areas. Mean temperature values at Kalispell show a high of 68.4°F. in July and a low of 21.4°F. in January. The annual precipitation is slightly over 15 inches at Kalispell.

6. Vegetation

Although there are a variety of vegetation subcommunities on the island, there are three basic types of plant communities. These are ponderosa pine (32.19%), Douglas-fir (10.24%) and grasses and fields (55.88%) (Matthews 1973). As a result of introduction of domestic livestock and related husbandry activities the grass communities are a mixture of native and introduced species. Timber is generally confined to the north and east slopes; however, pockets of timber do occur on the south and west slopes.

7. Fish and Wildlife

a. Fish

Under present conditions Flathead Lake has been classified as an "A open D lake" by the Montana Water Pollution Control Authority. This classification indicates that water may be used for drinking, culinary and food processing purposes for use after simple disinfection treatment and removal of natural impurities.

Flathead Lake is an oligotrophic lake; dissolved solids content is low and the water is clear. Although some surface temperatures reach the 70°F. range in mid-summer, temperatures below 10 feet in depth usually range from 40°F. to 60°F. The water is slightly alkaline (pH 7.0 to 8.3) and oxygen is abundant at all depths.

Of the ten known game-fish species presently inhabiting the lake, only four are native to the drainage. Nongame fishes in the lake include six native and two introduced species. Table 1 lists the species inhabiting the lake. A number of other species have been introduced but failed to survive or reproduce naturally.

The Flathead Lake fishery is dependent on the natural reproduction in the lake of

some species and the recruitment of reproduction from the tributary system above the lake. Due to the migratory nature of cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, kokanee and mountain whitefish into tributary streams, these fishes are dependent upon the lake-tributary complex. The spawning habitat of the tributary streams and the rearing quality of the lake provide the requirements of a self-sustaining fishery.

Fishing pressure on the lake has been measured with an estimate of some 130,000 man-days per year in 1964. Nonresident fishermen represent nearly 25 percent of the total fishing pressure.

Table 1. Species of fishes inhabiting Flathead Lake and origin

Game Fish	Origin	Nongame Fish	Origin
Lake trout	Introduced	Yellow perch	Introduced
Dolly Varden	Native	Northern squawfish	Native
Cutthroat trout	Native	Peamouth	Native
Rainbow trout	Introduced	Pumpkinseed	Introduced
Brook trout	Introduced	(Columbia River	Native
Kokanee	Introduced	(largescale sucker	
Mountain whitefish	Native	Longnose sucker	Native
Lake whitefish	Introduced	Redside shiner	Native
Pygmy whitefish	Native		
Largemouth bass	Introduced		

The retention of a quality sport fishery in Flathead Lake depends upon maintenance and preservation of a high quality aquatic habitat in the river-lake system and upon natural reproduction in this water system.

b. Wildlife

Although Wild Horse Island is primarily noted for its bighorn sheep, other species of game and a variety of nongame species occur on the island. The proximity (one mile) to the mainland, permits free interchange of most small birds as well as some mammals.

Coyotes, bobcats and porcupines live on the island. The birds that reside on the island or visit regularly include many species of song birds, golden and bald eagles, hawks, falcons, blue and ruffed grouse as well as many waterfowl species. Flathead Lake does freeze about one year in ten, Big Arm bay around Wild Horse Island more frequently, thus making it possible for wild mammals to travel to or leave the island if they so desire.

Several attempts have been made to stock the island with native and non-native species of animals.

Wild Horse Island must be considered unique with its herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. In 1939, the first of several transplants occurred with a male (yearling) and a female placed on the island. In 1947, the Montana Department of Fish and Game made an additional plant of four sheep from the Sun River Canyon in central Montana. The herd in 1972 was estimated at 240 individuals with the population fluctuating at times. Late winter aerial flights in 1977 revealed less than 200 sheep.

As the sheep herd increased there was a decrease in the mule deer herd. These facts may or may not be correlated. In 1954, the deer herd was estimated at about 300-400 animals; however, they had declined to about 200 animals in 1964. By 1972, the deer population was estimated at about 75.

B. Human Environment

1. Lake County

Agricultural uses of land predominate in the broad valley areas of Lake County and include cereal grains, beef production, dairy production, pasture and orchards. The timber products industry is also a very important part of the socio-economic picture in Lake County. During the past decade a year-round recreation industry has assumed an important role.

A major portion of Lake County lies within the exterior boundaries of the Flathead Indian Reservation. Wild Horse Island is located within that boundary.

a. Subdivision Activities

Subdivision activities in Lake County have accelerated in the 1970's. The presence of Flathead Lake and the outstanding recreational opportunities have attracted numerous purchasers of summer homes and/or recreational developments. This trend can be expected to continue as Flathead Valley populations are increasing at a 4.5 percent annual growth rate.

History reveals that Wild Horse Island had a number of landowners dating back to homesteading in 1910. Following several patterns of ownership, the entire island came into the ownership of R. Bourke MacDonald in 1961. By 1977, limited subdivision activity had occurred on the island. To date 47 lots totaling 43 acres have been sold to individual private owners. In addition, the owners will retain another nine acres for their personal use and to meet existing sale obligations.

b. Utility and Transportation

No major utility networks or systems cross the island although a number of major and minor utility networks are available on the mainland. The northern portions of Flathead valley are served by U.S. Highway 2. Highway 93, a federal designated highway, serves the west shore of Flathead Lake and lies about one and one-half miles west of Wild Horse Island. State Route 35 serves the east shore. All access to the island is by boat. Glacier International Airport between the cities of Whitefish and Kalispell and Columbia Falls provides air transportation for Frontier Hughes and Air West Airlines. Amtrak provides rail passenger transportation to and from Whitefish. Kerr Dam and Hydroelectric Plant located near Polson has a generating capacity of 186,000 kilowats. This energy is fed into the electrical transmission network.

c. Population

The Flathead County population in 1960 was 32,965. As of the 1970 census, Flathead County had a population of 39,460; in addition, Lake County had a population of some 14,445. The latest census taken in 1974 reveals a Flathead County population of 42,617. Projected

population is expected to maintain this rate of increase.

The Flathead-Lake County area is a relatively undeveloped, general recreation area. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 1971 shows a top preference for this type of setting.

2. Land Use

Wild Horse Island was first homesteaded beginning in 1910 for a very brief period. Several early owners made attempts to develop the island but failed. In 1925, a dude ranch was established on the island and operated until the mid-1930's. As a part of the dude ranch business some livestock, including horses, were raised on the island, but this venture proved to be short-lived with severe winter conditions in the mid-1950's. No commercial venture of this nature has occurred in the past two decades and the island has reverted to its own semi-natural state.

3. Economics

Flathead and Lake Counties both influence the area surrounding Flathead Lake and its environs. In both cases broad based employment provides a stable and growing economic base. However, Flathead County characteristics demonstrate an economy that is led by manufacturing with other significant contributions from wholesale trade, government service and agriculture. Lake County economics on the other hand are based on agriculture as the prime source of income followed by manufacturing which is basically wood products.

Flathead County earnings for the year 1971 approached one hundred million dollars. In 1974, the Lake County agriculture economy produced approximately seventeen million dollars and was the leading county income producer. In the 1964-74 period, the number of farms remained about the same, but the average size of each farm increased significantly. In both counties, tourism has shown a healthy growth during the past decade.

4. Recreational Opportunities

Flathead Lake lies in the center of a vast recreational complex of opportunities that is second to none in the United States. The lake itself is the largest fresh water lake west of the Mississippi in the contiguous 48 states. At this point in history, recreation is the third largest industry in northwestern Montana and certainly the fastest growing. Within an air-line radius of some 60 miles there are about 400 other lakes and a vast complex of rivers and streams.

The role that this area has assumed in the national recreation scene is demonstrated by visitations to federal areas such as Glacier National Park, National Bison Range, Ninepipe and Pablo Waterfowl Refuges, Bob Marshall Wilderness Area, Mission Mountain Wilderness Area and a host of other recreational features. The State of Montana, Cities of Kalispell and Polson, Counties of Lake and Flathead all have developed recreational programs of major proportions for their residents and visitors. Recreation opportunities have also been developed by private citizens and corporations.

The area is inhabited by a number of big and small game animals and provides outstanding hunting for elk, deer, goats, bighorn sheep, moose, black bear and grizzly bear. Fishing for a variety of species including kokanee salmon in basin lakes and streams is very popular with about 130,000 man-days of fishing expended on Flathead Lake alone. In addition, it is estimated that the upper tributaries provide about 64,000 man-days of fishing.

Winter sports include snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, ice fishing, ice skating and downhill skiing at nationally renowned Big Mountain near Whitefish. In addition to winter sports there is golf, tennis, hiking, camping and a very wide variety of outdoor summer sports available.

5. Historical and Archaeological

The remains of the old Hiawatha Lodge still exists on the island; however, the significance of this site is unknown.

III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED ACTION

A. Physical Environment

The general aesthetics of the island should not deteriorate with public ownership of the island. Vegetative cover should remain about the same. With proper land management, some previous problems of overgrazing could be corrected. Littering and the potential for fire will increase with increased use of the area.

1. Geology

No environmental impact will result from the proposed action. Development has been very limited in the past and, with public ownership, should cease, or be very limited to basic facilities.

2. Surface and Ground Water

No appreciable effect is expected from the proposed action. Management of the public area could reduce erosion and overgrazing.

3. Soils

Increased public use could cause some soil compaction or erosion along with dust movement; however, this would be very small and could be effectively contained with management features. Proper design and regulation of use on the island will help minimize the impacts.

4. Vegetation

The general condition of browse and grasses should improve where overgrazing has caused problems. This has been a serious problem in the past and deterioration is still evident.

5. Wildlife

Establishment of management techniques can be expected to stabilize mule deer and sheep herds. This should ensure maintenance of a healthy, productive game population.

6. Fish

No effect anticipated.

B. Human Environment

1. Lake County

Although the purchase of Wild Horse Island by the State of Montana represents a large commitment it will not change substantially the land use patterns in Lake County. Essentially, all land acquired will remain in its present use. Public ownership would guarantee access to a unique natural resource and preserve it from further development or eventual total loss.

The island is ideal for various types of research on certain plant and animal resources. Long range benefits to the public could evolve from continuing research by the University of Montana and others on the many facets of wild communities.

a. Subdivision Activities

Although the present intent of the owners of Wild Horse Island is to cease subdivision, future owners could alter that course. The purchase of Wild Horse Island will preclude subdivision of the purchased area of the island.

b. Transportation System

No effect would be anticipated since roads would not be developed. However, in order to minimize visitor effects trails could be constructed.

2. Population and Income

Little, if any, effect will be anticipated if the State of Montana acquires Wild Horse Island. It is possible that the Montana Fish and Game Department and/or the University of Montana may hire one or more full-time persons as well as summertime help to meet short and long-term objectives.

3. Area Economics

That portion of the island now owned by the MacDonald family and considered for purchase by the state was taxed $4,018.33 by Lake County in 1976. This annual tax revenue plus any potential for future revenues which would otherwise accrue to the county from real

estate or personal property taxes will probably be lost to it as a result of the proposed purchase. Montana law provides that Department of Fish and Game lands which are administered with state general fund monies are not subject to "in lieu of taxes" which are paid on other lands administered by the department. As a state park, this site would probably be administered in part with general fund monies and therefore not subject to such payments.

Additionally, the department would consider acquiring in the future, if they become available, the remaining private holdings on the island. Should this happen, the county would lose the tax revenue presently being generated by these sites.

4. Recreational Opportunities

"Precious natural objects of rare beauty should belong to the public" said Thoreau. Our national parks system as well as state and local parks systems are predicated on the preposition that certain areas are of such value to society that they should remain in control of government. Wild Horse Island is unique and its purchase offers a rare opportunity that may disappear completely. Its values will most directly benefit residents of Fish and Game Regions 1 and 2.

Recreational opportunities that could be offered to the public will depend on a management plan to be developed by the Department of Fish and Game and the University of Montana. Public ownership of the island will result in an increase in visitations for recreational pursuits such as fishing, sightseeing, picnicking, photography, hiking and bird watching.

Several options for management of the big game population are available to the Department of Fish and Game. Trapping and transplanting or hunting are two possible methods that in either case could provide direct or indirect additional recreation opportunities to Montanans or their guests.

The preservation and enhancement of outdoor recreation activities will be a beneficial impact. Recreation use on the proposed acquisition will increase for several reasons:

a. Guaranteed public access.

b. Increased potential user population.

c. Increased variety of user activities.

d. Improved wildlife habitat.

e. Special management of the island.

5. Historical and Archaeological

Any recognized historical or archaeological sites will be protected.

IV. MITIGATING MEASURES IN PROPOSED ACTION

a. A memorandum of agreement will be drawn between the Montana Department of Fish and Game and the University of Montana to obtain optimum objectives.

b. An interagency agreement will be developed between the Fish and Game Department and the State Forester for fire control.

c. Litter containers and educational material will be utilized with "pack-in, pack-out" programs to reduce the increased litter expected with increased use.

d. Any anticipated structures will be designed, located and constructed to conform with or to enhance the surroundings.

e. The deer and sheep populations will be managed to keep them in line with habitat and environment.

f. An effective interpretive program will be established to effect a beneficial impact by promoting awareness.

V. ADVERSE EFFECTS WHICH CANNOT BE AVOIDED

a. Regardless of controls and educational programs some damage to soil and vegetation will occur with increased public use.

b. There will be a loss of property tax to the Lake County government.

c. The potential for man-caused fires on the island will, no doubt, increase from increased recreational use. However, coordination with the State Forester of the Department of Natural Resources could minimize this.

d. Vandalism of privately owned summer homes may increase due to public access and increased recreational use of the island. Additional law enforcement control of vandalism and other problem areas could assist in minimizing this problem.

e. It is expected that poaching of big game animals, deer and sheep could increase over present levels with increased public access and recreational use of the island.

f. Sanitation problems will probably increase.

g. Conflict with adjacent landowners on the island may increase significantly with increased public use.

VI. SHORT-TERM USES VERSUS LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Present uses of the proposed acquisition of the island are for subdivision and general dispersed recreation. The proposed project ensures that public recreationists will have regulated access to the area, that public agencies can conduct research, and that wildlife could be maintained on the area in line with the carrying capacity of the environment. Public recreation at the moment is at the discretion of the landowner. If the area is not acquired, private interests would probably restrict access in the near future.

There would be no guarantee that in the near future additional subdivision would not take place. Second-home development would probably accelerate, thus the land would be converted, irrevocably, from open space to a less desirable environment. Purchase offers in the past have naturally been at much smaller fees. Purchase by the State of Montana would reduce the land available for further subdivision and would ensure preservation of habitat for big game animals and would retain open space and recreational opportunities.

Direct taxes to Lake County will be lost; however, direct and indirect incidental

income from additional jobs provided by the Montana Department of Fish and Game and/or the University of Montana will occur.

VII. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

The purchase of this land permanently commits the land to public ownership and outdoor recreation use. Granting of monies from the Land and Water Conservation Fund requires that no change in land use may occur without the consent of the Secretary of the Interior (Section 6(f)). The commitment of financial resources to acquire the land can be considered irreversible and irretrievable, and the state will have a continued financial responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the proposed acquisition.

VIII. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

A. No Action

If the State of Montana does not purchase Wild Horse Island it will remain in the private sector. Several potential alternatives are available to the present owners. It could be sold to another private individual or corporation, subdivided further or remain as is.

Further subdivision of the land would lead to further restrictions for the public use of the island and possibly termination of access to the island. Under this alternative there could be a reduction of habitat available for big game species and perhaps elimination of a major portion if not all of the sheep population. Open space, dispersed and specific recreational use for all but the island owners would be virtually eliminated. Even though the tax base would be increased the cost of services to the island could exceed the benefits.

If the land ownership were to remain with the present owners they could continue the policy of providing access to those whom they choose. However, it is possible that pressures from the public to utilize the area for recreation could exceed the tolerance of the landowner and thus reduce access.

B. Acquire Less Land

The acquisition of a smaller portion of Wild Horse Island would result in additional problems as well as intensify management problems described. Additional private ownership above that already deleted from the purchase would mean an increase in the number of lots for development thus increased competition with public users. This would also intensify public use on a smaller unit. It would mean an invitation for recreational subdivision.

C. Acquire More Land

The acquisition of more land would mean the acquisition of one or more of the private lots on the island. While purchase of these lots would not materially increase the amount of recreation available to the public, nor would there be a significant increase in habitat for animals, the removal of conflicting uses is viewed as desirable.

The Montana Department of Fish and Game would consider the acquisition of these lots from willing sellers as they become available.

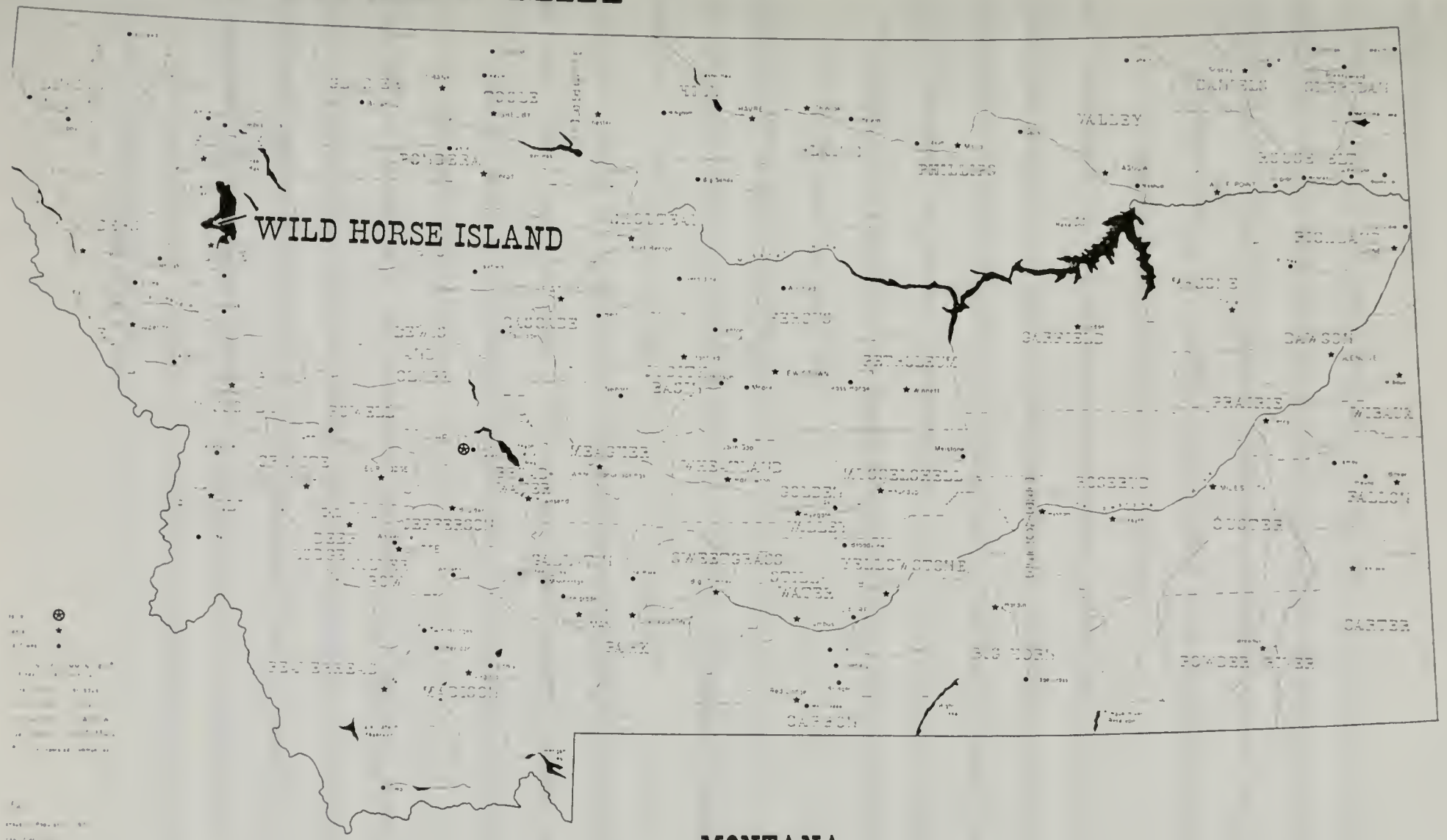
D. Acquisition of Other Lands

Wild Horse Island is a unique situation providing recreational opportunities not available anywhere else in Montana. The acquisition of other lands would not provide these opportunities. The acquisition of other lands would not include the donation of the landowner, thus the state would have to spend additional sums of money to gain a comparable area. Acquisition of Wild Horse Island was mandated by House Bill 836 of the 45th Legislature.

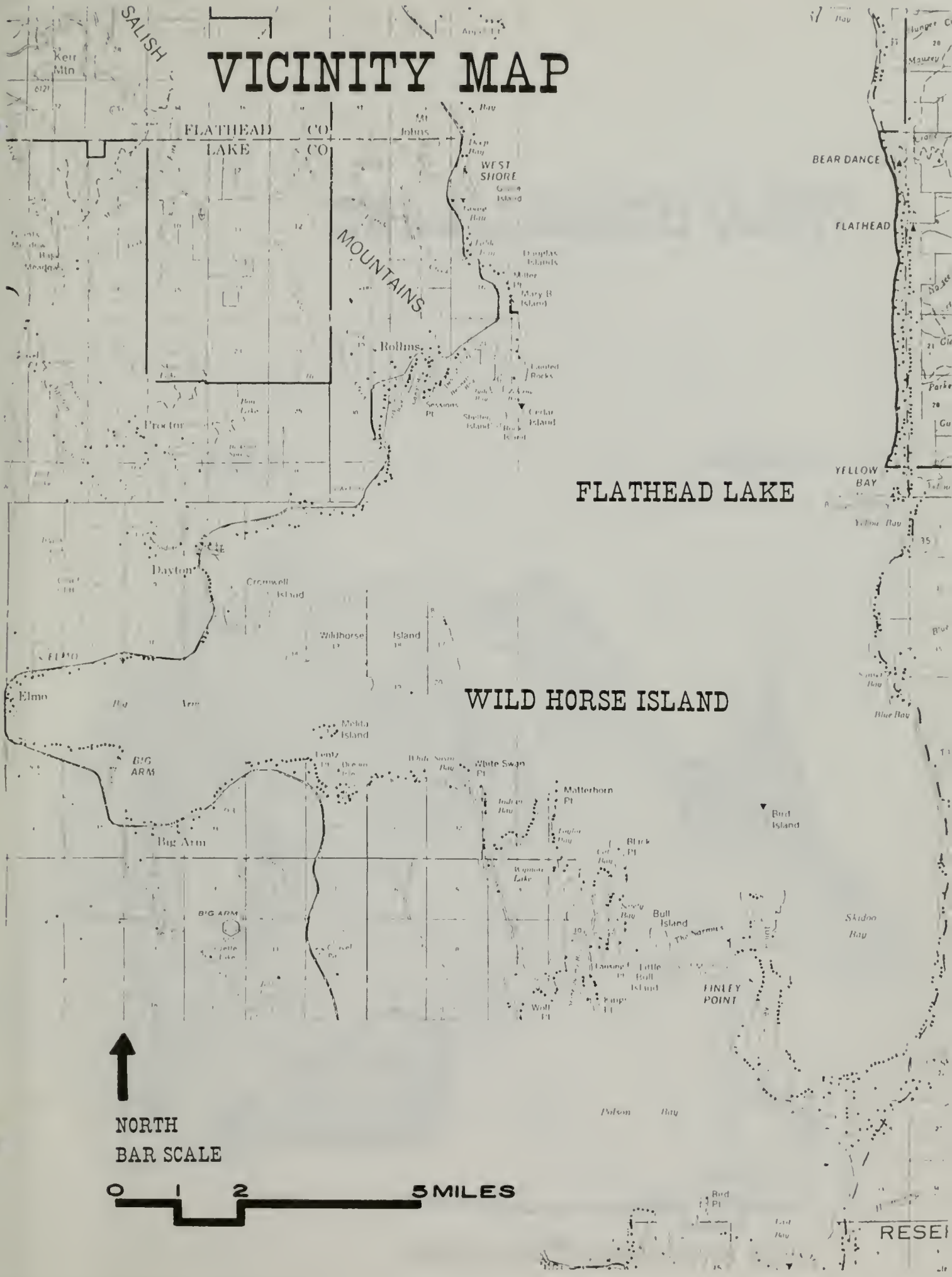
E. Management Alternatives

Wild Horse Island, if purchased, will be studied by the Montana Department of Fish and Game and the University of Montana to develop a management plan for the island. The land will be classified as a state park and used primarily for recreation and research. A management plan and an environmental impact statement will be presented to the public and agencies for comment.

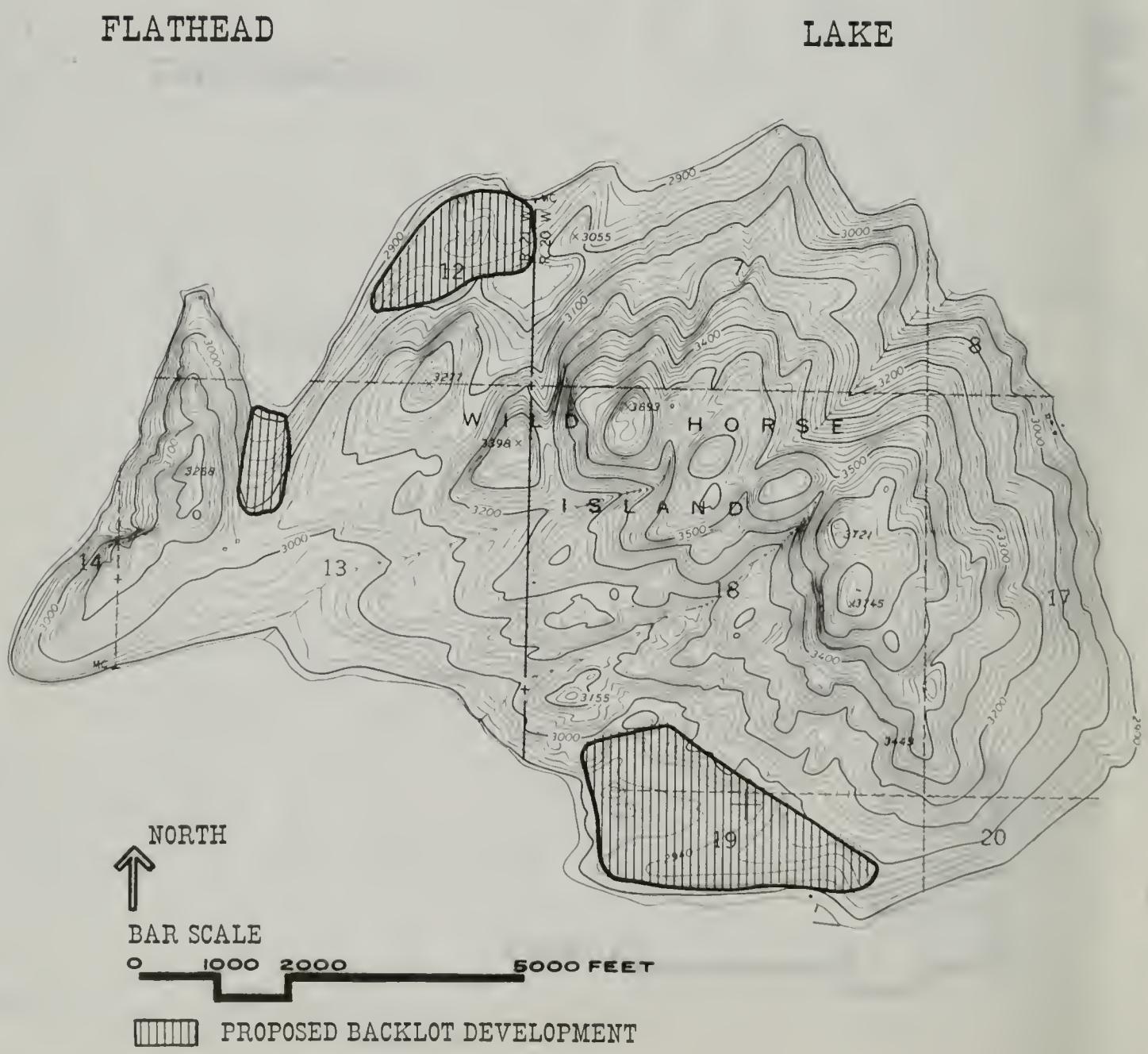
AREA LOCATION MAP



VICINITY MAP



WILD HORSE ISLAND



VEGETATION MAP

CONTRIBUTORS

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